



Updating the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework: Chair's Draft

June 21, 2021

The current effort to update the NAEP Reading Framework represents the first comprehensive update of the Board's framework that guides the NAEP reading assessment in nearly two decades.

Background

On May 28, 2021, Governing Board Chair, Governor Haley Barbour, convened a working group of members from across the Governing Board's standing committees who represent a cross-section of views expressed on the framework. ***The Governing Board has always endeavored to reach consensus on significant policy matters and this latest cross-committee, collaborative effort is a current example of that.***

- Chair Barbour assembled the group to review the Development Panel's draft recommendations and to make further revisions as the final step in the consensus-building process for Board consideration and stakeholder input.
- The Chair's group convened for three working sessions (June 3, June 9, and June 11, 2021) before developing a consensus draft.
- The Chair's group applauded the Development Panel's research and the many hours spent by the panel crafting the recommendations, which were integral to this deliberative process.
- The Assessment Development Committee met on June 14 to provide feedback, and additional edits were made in collaboration with the Chair's group.
- The Chair's group believes this consensus draft represents a step forward in the process by clarifying key changes to the assessment proposed in the framework,

streamlining introductory context to focus on the most important issues for the NAEP Reading Assessment, and strengthening the description and rationale for proposed Universal Design Elements for which there is not consensus in the field.

- The Chair's group and the Assessment Development Committee have agreed that they are willing to support this consensus draft.

Major Provisions Worth Highlighting In The Chair's Draft

- It ***underscores the continuing commitment to equity*** by designing a NAEP Reading Assessment that is non-biased, inclusive, and accessible for the full diversity of students.
 - The Chair's draft deletes some of the references to equity to reduce redundancy and ambiguity, but it was a priority to ensure that the Board's commitment to equity in assessment design was solidified and clearly defined in the draft (see page 5). In addition, equity is now defined in the framework as a broad overarching goal that guides the assessment (see page 75).
- It ***clarifies the definition of reading comprehension*** by recognizing that learning and reading are shaped by many factors.
 - The Chair's draft made minor edits to the definition (see pages 6 & 13). The edits were made to address misconceptions that put 'cognitive process' and 'sociocultural context' in competition with each other. Reading comprehension is a complex process shaped by many factors, including the social and cultural experiences of all readers throughout their lives. This sentiment is reflected in the updated definition.
- It ***reflects research-based developments*** that help ensure that the NAEP Reading Assessment remains a useful measure of reading comprehension.
 - The Chair's draft made edits to clarify the impact of social and cultural experiences on the learning and development of reading comprehension (see page 16). The framework still includes consideration of three additional, research-based concepts: how social and cultural experiences shape learning and development; how reading varies across disciplines; and the increasing use of digital and multimodal texts (see page 9).

- It ***incorporates the innovative use of an Informational Universal Design Element (UDE)*** designed to provide orientations to topics, concepts, or obscure vocabulary that students may need to make meaning from text as they read.
 - The Chair's draft made edits to the label and rationale for knowledge-based UDEs to decouple this type of UDE from the impact of background knowledge (see page 27). The operationalization of informational UDEs is the same as the knowledge-based UDEs that they replace: they may consist of brief passage introductions and vocabulary word pop-ups in real-time to offer a definition of an obscure word that is not part of the content being assessed. The updated label and rationale make it clear that the assessment will not remove the impact of background knowledge and that the use of pop-up definitions will be limited, consistent with their use in the current assessment. The controversy with knowledge-based UDEs was primarily due to their rationale, not the elements themselves. The updated label and rationale are intended to keep NAEP out of the controversy of how efforts to improve reading comprehension should address background knowledge (see page 15). As an assessment, NAEP should not need to take a stand on this issue, especially if there is not agreement in the field.
- It ***represents the first comprehensive update since the assessment went digital in 2017*** and given the past year of virtual and hybrid instruction modes of learning, the framework update is key to maintaining NAEP's position as a leader in large-scale assessment.
 - The Chair's draft made edits to eliminate some detail about the transition to digital that was not necessary to include in the framework, especially since the assessment would have been digital for nearly 10 years by the time the updated framework is operationalized. The framework still includes information on how the digital platform allows for a greater variety of formats, including selecting key words or sentences in a passage, dragging and dropping responses to complete a sequence or chart, and selecting more than one correct response (see page 3).
- It ***collects valuable data and information*** from students, teachers and principals that are directly related to reading and will help to inform key stakeholders and research efforts.

- The Chair's draft made edits to avoid misconceptions that NAEP was measuring general beliefs and attitudes which is not allowed by the law. The framework still includes a NAEP reporting system that will provide information on research-based contextual variables (derived from questionnaires and surveys) that may help contribute to a better understanding of what America's students know and can do (see page 62).

Rationale for Changes in Chapter 1

- Text from the current (2019) NAEP Reading Framework added with the following goals:
 - To clarify provisions in the NAEP law
 - To state explicitly that the definition applies only to the assessment of reading on NAEP
 - To clarify the appropriate role and scope of NAEP
- Text added to stress the importance of maintaining trend as a Governing Board priority for this framework update
- Edits made to clarify that multimedia features will be included in the actual assessment
- Edits made to define equity as a broad overarching goal guiding the assessment, and to stress the Board's continuing commitment to equity
- Edits made to definition of reading comprehension to avoid any perception of the cognitive process and sociocultural context being in competition with one another
- Edits made to clarify that the assessment design enables gathering of information on many experiences and factors (which would include social and cultural experiences and factors, but are not limited to those)
- Edits made to reduce the use of the term "precise" because precision has a specific technical meaning (random error) that is different from accuracy (systematic error); maintained references to "precisely-defined constructs" when referring to Universal Design for Assessment
- Edits made to add "whenever feasible" to the disaggregation of socioeconomic status and race and to clarify what the law requires related to the reporting of socio-economic status
- Edits made to clarify that questionnaire data is based on self-reported variables

- Edits made to clarify that NAEP is not designed for producing causal inferences
- Edits made to correct an error in the previous draft, which mistakenly listed one universal design element as a knowledge-based UDE instead of a task-based UDE

Rationale for Changes in Chapter 2

- Changes made to the label and definition of knowledge-based UDE (now informational UDE) to divorce this type of UDE from background knowledge and clarify that NAEP does not need to take an explicit position on the controversial debate of whether or not background knowledge should be part of the assessment of reading comprehension
- Edits made to clarify that NAEP Reading Assessment has and will continue to be a useful measure of reading comprehension
- Edits made to avoid concerns with measuring general beliefs and attitudes not allowed by law
- Edits made to clarify that topic previews should not be multimedia
- Edits made to avoid the perception that the NAEP questionnaires will be intrusive

Rationale for Changes in Chapter 3

- Edits made to clarify that videos have already been used as part of the assessment itself
- Text added to elaborate on the need for passage selection to be reflective of diversity
- Edits made to the description of fairness because the section in which it appears is not related to the appropriateness of decisions based on test scores

Rationale for Changes in Chapter 4

- Edits made to clarify that the reporting provisions are aligned with the law
- Edits made to clarify that NAEP is not designed for explanatory purposes
- Edits made to clarify that the questionnaire data are based on self-reported variables
- Edits made to avoid using self-efficacy as an example due to concerns about intrusiveness